Fed Tap May Aid Meier

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The federal government's embarrassment over domestic spying by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) may become the cause celebre of a tax evasion case lodged against former Howard Hughes aide John Meier.

An affidavit filed in federal court here Monday by the U.S. Attorney's Office sought an extension of time to respond to Meier's charges that his tax evasion case should be thrown out of court because he was spied on by the CIA.

The key phrase in the government's request was, "to give the United States government time to gather further information (as to Meier's accusations) and get guidance on policy decisions."

U.S. Attorneys involved in the case would not comment.

But, sources close to the case said that in light of what appears to be a sweeping U.S. Senate investigation, coupled with a probe ordered by President Gerald Ford, there "may be problems" in the Meier case.

Meier was indicted by a Las Vegas federal grand jury on two counts of federal tax evasion growing out of his role in the sale of Nevada mining claims to Hughes.

Meier was scheduled to appear in federal court in Reno on Jan. 6 for trial. He failed to appear but his attorney, Robert Wyshak, of Los Angeles, filed a motion charging the case against Meier should be dismissed on grounds Meier was the victim of unwarranted CIA surveillance.